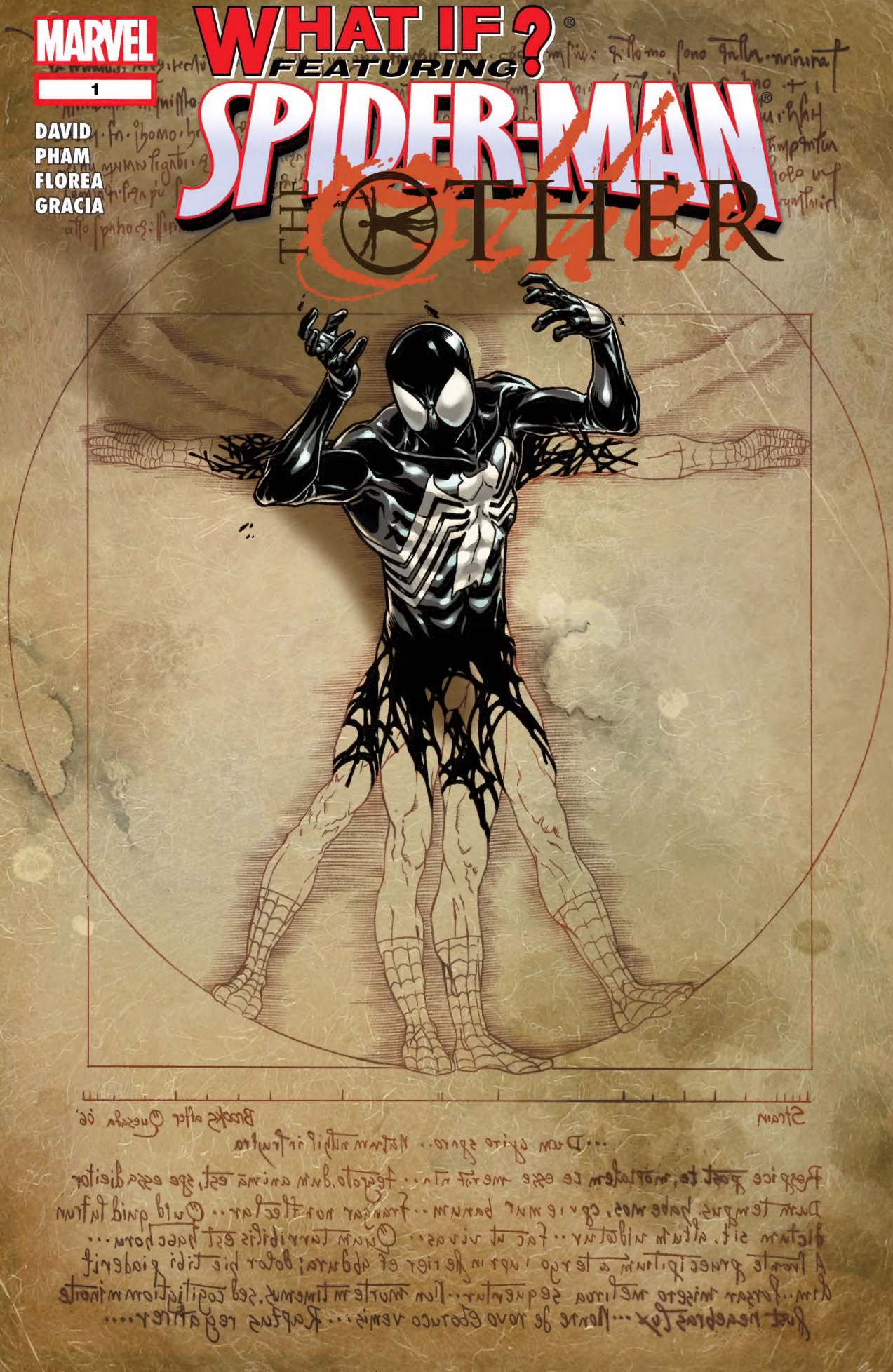
MARVEL

WHAT IF? FEATURING SPIDER-MAN

1

DAVID
PHAM
FLOREA
GRACIA

THE OTHER



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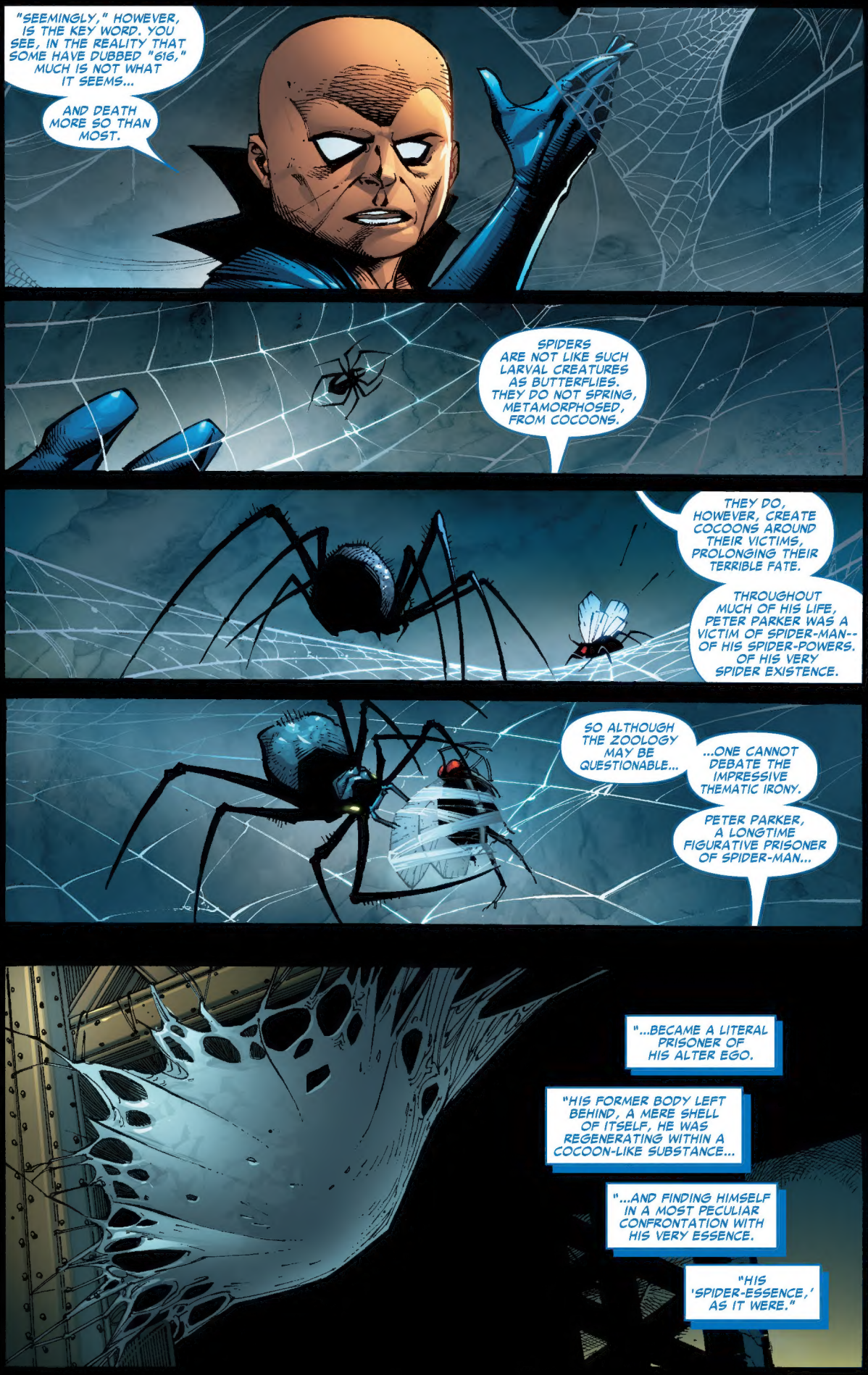
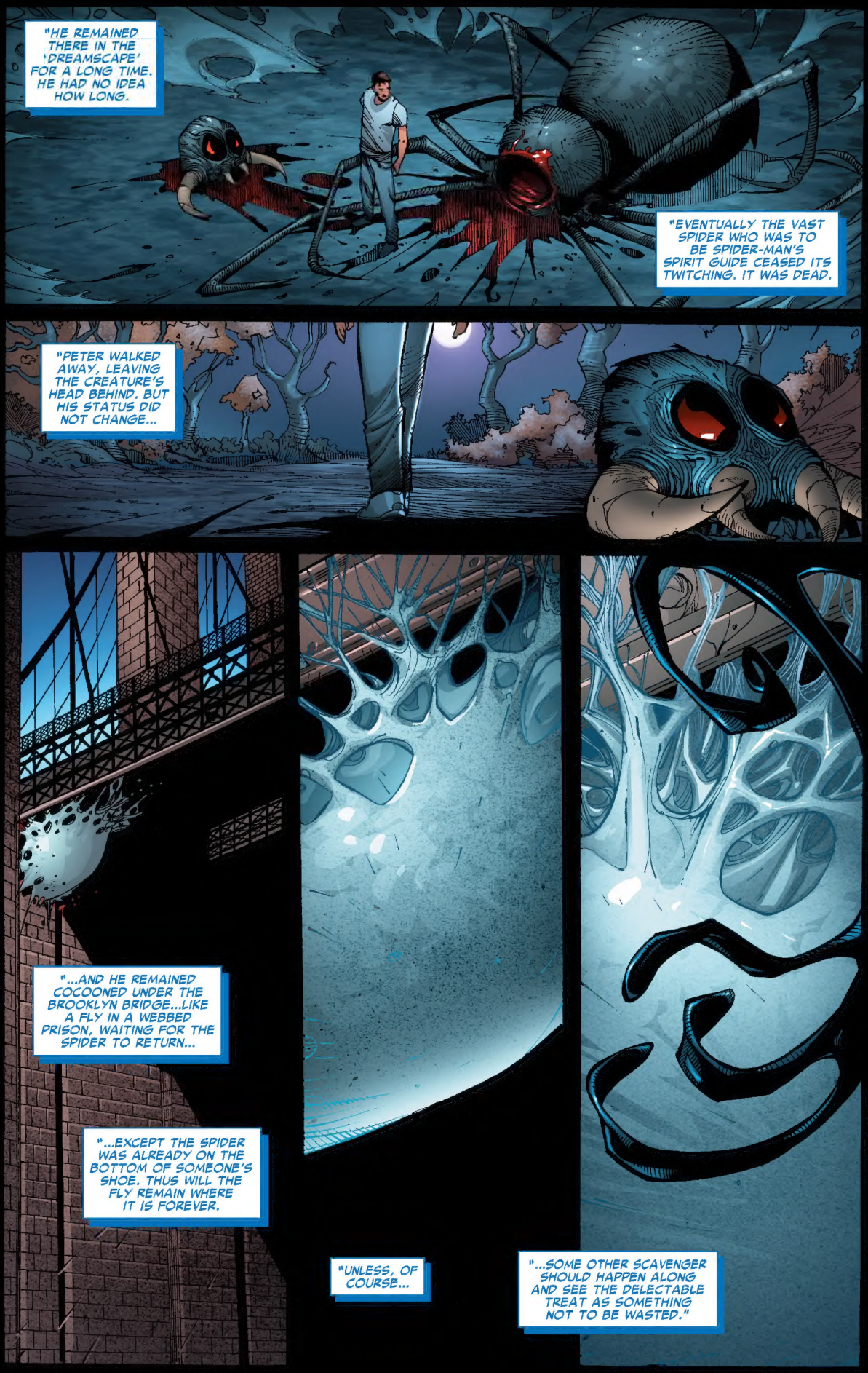

"SEEMINGLY," HOWEVER, IS THE KEY WORD. YOU SEE, IN THE REALITY THAT SOME HAVE DUBBED "616," MUCH IS NOT WHAT IT SEEMS...
AND DEATH MORE SO THAN MOST.
SPIDERS ARE NOT LIKE SUCH LARVAL CREATURES AS BUTTERFLIES. THEY DO NOT SPRING, METAMORPHOSED, FROM COCOONS.
THEY DO, HOWEVER, CREATE COCOONS AROUND THEIR VICTIMS, PROLONGING THEIR TERRIBLE FATE.
THROUGHOUT MUCH OF HIS LIFE, PETER PARKER WAS A VICTIM OF SPIDER-MAN--OF HIS SPIDER-POWERS. OF HIS VERY SPIDER EXISTENCE.
SO ALTHOUGH THE ZOOLOGY MAY BE QUESTIONABLE...
...ONE CANNOT DEBATE THE IMPRESSIVE THEMATIC IRONY.
PETER PARKER, A LONGTIME FIGURATIVE PRISONER OF SPIDER-MAN...
"...BECAME A LITERAL PRISONER OF HIS ALTER EGO.
"HIS FORMER BODY LEFT BEHIND, A MERE SHELL OF ITSELF, HE WAS REGENERATING WITHIN A COCOON-LIKE SUBSTANCE...
"...AND FINDING HIMSELF IN A MOST PECULIAR CONFRONTATION WITH HIS VERY ESSENCE.
"HIS 'SPIDER-ESSENCE,' AS IT WERE."

"AND THE ESSENCE HAS A SIMPLE OFFER TO MAKE HIM.
"IT CLAIMED THAT, UNTIL NOW, HE HAD BEEN RESISTANT TO ACCEPTING THE SPIDER-SIDE OF HIMSELF. THAT HE HAD REFUSED TO WANDER FAR FROM THE COMFORTING STATUS OF BEING A MAN.
"THAT REBIRTH COULD BE HIS, BUT THERE WAS A PRICE.
"HE HAD TO BE WILLING TO ACCEPT BEING NOT ONLY MAN...BUT SPIDER AS WELL.
"'ARE YOU THE MAN WHO DREAMED OF BEING A SPIDER?' THE CREATURE WHO REPRESENTED THE 'GREAT WEAVER' ASKED HIM. 'OR THE SPIDER WHO DREAMED OF BEING A MAN? ARE YOU THE ONE...OR ARE YOU THE OTHER?'
"IN THE REALITY OF 616, PETER PARKER--TRUSTING HIS INSTINCTS--EMBRACED THE SPIDER."
WHAT IF SPIDER-MAN HAD REJECTED THE SPIDER?
POISON SELVES
PETER DAVID WRITER
KHOI PHAM PENCILER
SANDU FLOREA INKER
MARTE GRACIA COLORIST
VC'S JOE CARMAGNA LETTERER
MARK BROOKS & CHRISTINA STRAIN COVER
JACOB CHABOT PRODUCTION
NATHAN COSBY ASSISTANT EDITOR
MARK PANICCIA EDITOR
JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF
DAN BUCKLEY PUBLISHER

"BUT IN ANOTHER REALITY...IN THE ONE WE SEE HERE AND NOW...
"PETER PARKER'S INSTINCTS TOOK HIM IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION."
SKREEEEEEE
YOU THINK YOU CAN FOOL ME? PULL THE WEB OVER MY EYES? THINK AGAIN.
You... unbelievable... idiot...
SO I'M NOT RESURRECTED. WHY AM I ENTITLED TO BE? BECAUSE I'M ONE OF THE GOOD GUYS?
TONS OF GOOD GUYS DIE EVERY YEAR--FAR BRAVER AND MORE WORTHY THAN I AM--AND THEY DON'T GET A SHOT AT COMING BACK. I'M NOT ASKING FOR ANY FAVORS. BESIDES...
YOU SAID AS MUCH YOURSELF. GOD KNOWS WHAT I'D BE LIKE, COMING BACK EVEN MORE LIKE A SPIDER THAN I AM NOW.
I MEAN, WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT? FOUR MORE ARMS AGAIN? NOT INTERESTED IN TAKING THE RISK.
You have... no idea... what you've done...
YEAH, I HAVE. I SIMPLY REFUSED TO BE THE PUPPET ON YOUR WEBSTRINGS.
IF THE PRICE OF THAT IS THAT I DON'T GET TO CHEAT DEATH FOR THE UMPTEENTH TIME, SO BE IT.


"HE REMAINED THERE IN THE 'DREAMSCAPE' FOR A LONG TIME. HE HAD NO IDEA HOW LONG.
"EVENTUALLY THE VAST SPIDER WHO WAS TO BE SPIDER-MAN'S SPIRIT GUIDE CEASED ITS TWITCHING. IT WAS DEAD.
"PETER WALKED AWAY, LEAVING THE CREATURE'S HEAD BEHIND. BUT HIS STATUS DID NOT CHANGE...
"...AND HE REMAINED COCOONED UNDER THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE...LIKE A FLY IN A WEBBED PRISON, WAITING FOR THE SPIDER TO RETURN...
"...EXCEPT THE SPIDER WAS ALREADY ON THE BOTTOM OF SOMEONE'S SHOE. THUS WILL THE FLY REMAIN WHERE IT IS FOREVER.
"UNLESS, OF COURSE...
"...SOME OTHER SCAVENGER SHOULD HAPPEN ALONG AND SEE THE DELECTABLE TREAT AS SOMETHING NOT TO BE WASTED."

"THEY'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO KEEP US TRAPPED HERE. NEVER.
"MAYBE THE OLD MAC GARGAN, SURE."
THE GUY WHO USED TO CALL HIMSELF THE SCORPION. BUT NOT ANYMORE, BABY.
BECAUSE VENOM...HE'S A WHOLE DIFFERENT ANIMAL.
VENOM'S ON ANOTHER RANT AGAIN.
WHO CARES?
HE SAYS HE'S A "WHOLE DIFFERENT ANIMAL" NOW THAT HE'S GOT THAT ALIEN WHATCHAMACALLIT ATTACHED TO HIM, INSTEAD OF JUST A BIG HONKIN' TAIL.
YEAH, WELL, SPIDER-MAN KICKED HIS BUTT EITHER WAY. NOT SEEIN' THE DIFFERENCE M'SELF.
AND WHEN WE GET OUT OF HERE... OHHHH, IT'S GONNA BE BLOODY.
SO SPIDER-MAN GOT LUCKY. BIG DEAL. THAT'S BECAUSE I WAS STILL LEARNING WHAT I CAN DO. NOW THE NEXT TIME...NEXT TIME IS GOING TO BE A WHOLE DIFFERENT...
WHA...? WHAT'S WRONG?
SOMETHING'S GOING ON. WHAT'RE YOU...

"THE HUMAN CALLED MAC GARGAN DOES NOT UNDERSTAND A FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH ABOUT THE ALIEN SYMBIOTE WITH WHICH HE IS BONDED.
"THE FIRST HUMAN BEING WITH WHOM IT JOINED WAS PETER PARKER. THERE IS, AND ALWAYS WILL BE, A CONNECTION...
"...FOR ONE NEVER TRULY FORGETS ONE'S FIRST TRUE LOVE.
"IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT ONE ALWAYS HURTS ONE'S LOVED ONES.
"WHY ELSE WOULD THE SYMBIOTE HAVE AIDED IN THE ATTEMPTED MURDER OF ITS FIRST BOND-MATE, UNLESS IT WAS DISPLAYING THE CLASSIC BEHAVIOR OF A SPURNED LOVER?
"BUT NOW IT SENSES AN OPPORTUNITY LIKE NO OTHER. THOUGH THEY MAY BE SEPARATED BY MILES AND WALLS...
"...THE SYMBIOTE REMAINS CONNECTED TO PETER PARKER ON A LEVEL UNFATHOMABLE BY HUMAN MINDS.
"CERTAINLY MAC GARGAN CANNOT FATHOM IT."
WAIT! STOP! WHERE ARE YOU--?!
GET BACK HERE! DON'T LEAVE ME!
DON'T MAKE ME BE NOTHING AGAIN!

HOW THE HELL--?!
THAT DOOR'S SUPPOSED TO BE SEALED!
IT IS SEALED! THAT THING MUST'VE FOUND A--
WHO CARES?!?
GET OUT THERE! HELP THE REST OF ALPHA SQUAD! TELL THEM WHAT WE SAW!
I'LL MONITOR FROM HERE!
ATTENTION ATTENTION
CODE BLACK. REPEAT-- CODE BLACK.
SET YOUR GUN ON HIGH-SONIC.
I DIDN'T JUST START WORKING HERE YESTERDAY, BOB. I KNOW THE DRILL.
WE HAVE A SECURITY BREACH. REPEAT--
--A SECURITY BREACH.

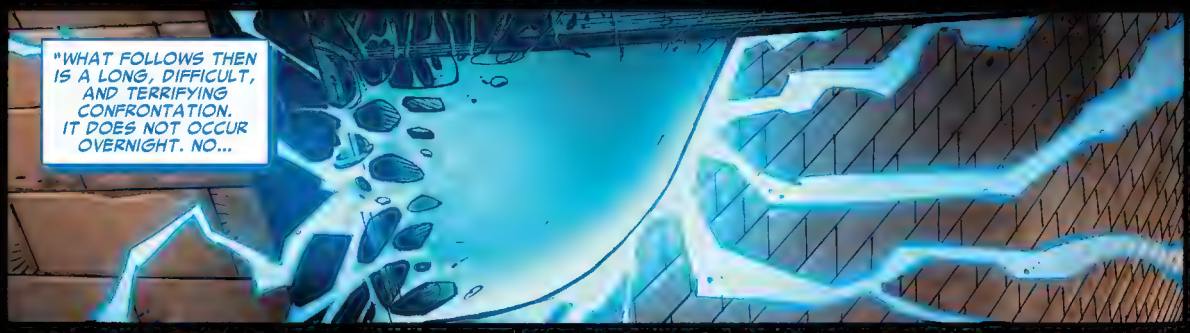
APPROACH WITH CAUTION. ALL UNITS, REPORT TO SECTOR 5.
CONTROL ROOM

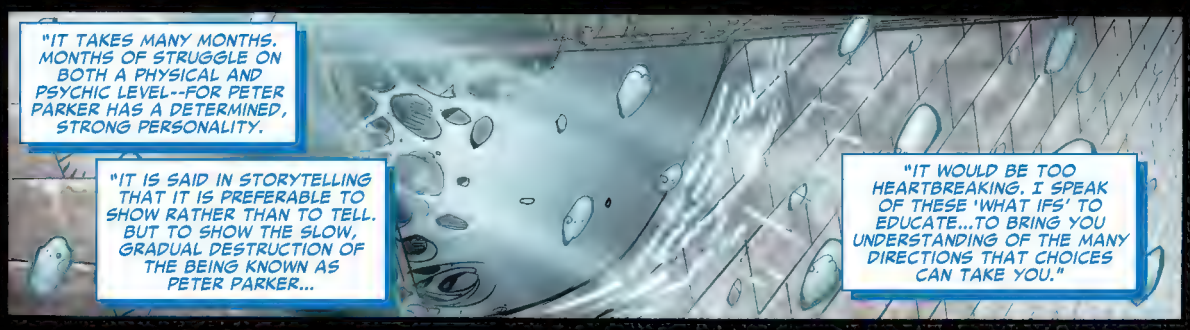
REPEAT, ALL UNITS REPORT TO SECTOR 5. THIS IS NOT A DRILL. REPEAT...
AAAHHHH!

...THIS IS NOT A DRILL.

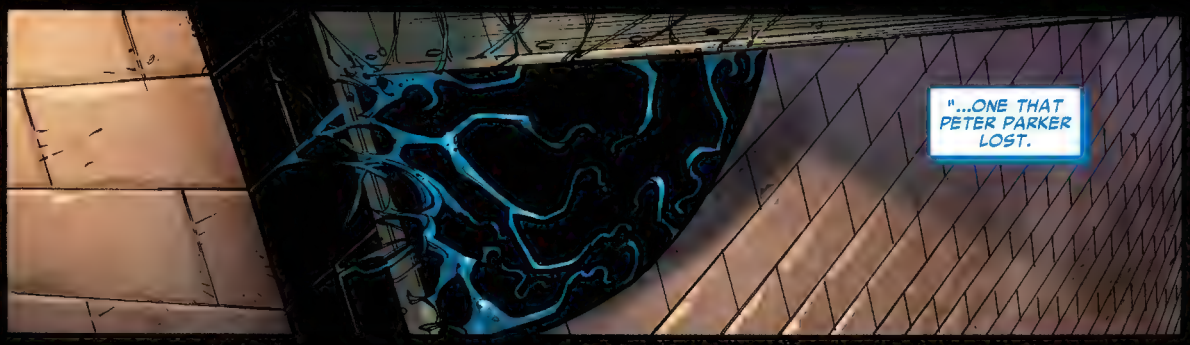
"THERE IS NO TRUE ATTACHMENT TO THE SYMBIOTE'S LATEST CONQUEST. IT IS MERELY A MEANS TO AN END. AND THAT END IS TO GET TO ITS SOUL MATE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE."

"IN THIS REGARD, IT SUCCEEDS. ONCE IT HAS ACCOMPLISHED THAT...
"...IT DISCARDS ITS HOST, LIKE AN UNGRATEFUL GUEST.
"ITS FOCUS IS ELSEWHERE, YOU SEE.
"IT IS THE ALIEN SYMBIOTE'S INTENTION...
"IT SENSES THAT PETER'S METAMORPHOSIS IS STALLED. THAT PETER HAS CHOSEN TO REMAIN...FOR WANT OF A BETTER TERM...HALF A BEING. THERE IS A GAP IN HIS POTENTIAL.
"...TO FILL THAT GAP."


"WHAT FOLLOWS THEN IS A LONG, DIFFICULT, AND TERRIFYING CONFRONTATION. IT DOES NOT OCCUR OVERNIGHT. NO...


"IT TAKES MANY MONTHS. MONTHS OF STRUGGLE ON BOTH A PHYSICAL AND PSYCHIC LEVEL--FOR PETER PARKER HAS A DETERMINED, STRONG PERSONALITY.
"IT IS SAID IN STORYTELLING THAT IT IS PREFERABLE TO SHOW RATHER THAN TO TELL. BUT TO SHOW THE SLOW, GRADUAL DESTRUCTION OF THE BEING KNOWN AS PETER PARKER...
"IT WOULD BE TOO HEARTBREAKING. I SPEAK OF THESE 'WHAT IFS' TO EDUCATE...TO BRING YOU UNDERSTANDING OF THE MANY DIRECTIONS THAT CHOICES CAN TAKE YOU."

NOT TO SEND YOU INTO SPIRALS OF DEPRESSION, NOR DEPICT THINGS SO NIGHTMARISH THAT YOU WILL NEVER HAVE ANOTHER FULL NIGHT'S SLEEP, EVER, IF YOU BEAR WITNESS TO THEM.
SO TAKE THE WORD OF UATU, THE WATCHER, THAT IT WAS A LONG AND TERRIBLE BATTLE. AND ULTIMATELY...


"...ONE THAT PETER PARKER LOST.

"BY THIS TIME, WINTER HAD ROLLED INTO SPRING. A TIME OF BIRTH AND REBIRTH.
"THERE IS ANOTHER FAMED EXPRESSION FROM HUMAN STORYTELLING. I BELIEVE IT GOES..."

"...IT WAS A DARK AND STORMY NIGHT.
"THE MAID SCREAMED."
EEEEEEEE

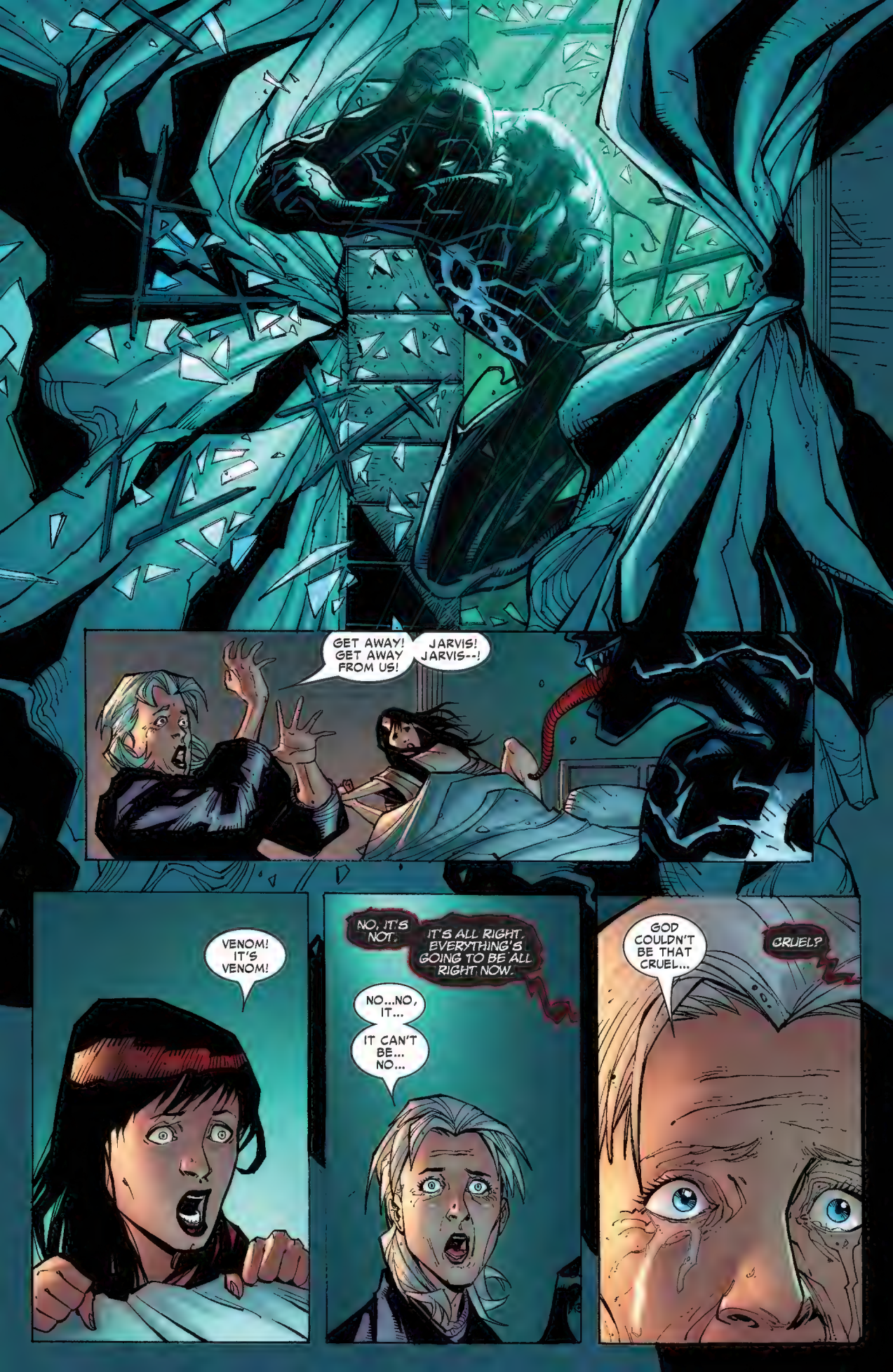
EEEEEEEE
MARY JANE, WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S WRONG?
OH GOD...OH GOD...
THE DREAMS AGAIN?
OHHHH, GOD...
MARY JANE, IT'S MAY. IT'S ALL RIGHT. YOU'RE AWAKE.
BUT... BUT WHAT IF IT FOLLOWED ME...?
WHAT "IT?"
THE NIGHTMARE?
IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP? SOME WARM MILK, PERHAPS?
IT'S NOTHING I CAN'T HANDLE, JARVIS. GO BACK TO BED. I'LL BE ALONG SHORTLY.
ARE YOU QUITE SURE...?
ABSOLUTELY.

WE SHOULDN'T HAVE STAYED HERE IN THE TOWER, MAY. ONCE PETER DIED, WE SHOULD HAVE LEFT. THE NIGHTMARES...
NIGHTMARES?
THE NIGHTMARES LIVE HERE. ALL THE MEMORIES...THERE'S NO ESCAPING THEM.
I'M DROWNING IN THEM, AND COMING UP WITH MORE OF MY OWN.
I KEEP HAVING NIGHTMARES ABOUT HIM COMING BACK...

BUT...IF PETER CAME BACK... WOULDN'T THAT BE A WONDERFUL THING? WOULDN'T THAT BE A MIRACLE?

NOT THIS WAY. NOT THIS--
MARY JANE, IF IT WILL GIVE YOU PEACE, WE'LL MOVE. WE'LL FIND A PLACE TOMORROW. START A NEW LIFE, START--

MARY JANE?


GET AWAY! GET AWAY FROM US!
JARVIS! JARVIS--!
VENOM! IT'S VENOM!
NO, IT'S NOT.
IT'S ALL RIGHT. EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT NOW.
NO...NO, IT...
IT CAN'T BE... NO...
GOD COULDN'T BE THAT CRUEL...
CRUEL?

AUNT MAY... THIS IS A KINDNESS. THIS IS AN ACT OF LOVE.
LOVE AND GLORY EVERLASTING.
A TRUE BLESSING. STANDING RIGHT HERE IN FRONT OF YOU. THE KIND YOU PRAY FOR IN CHURCH AND YOU NEVER GET. AND YOU JUST HAVE TO FIGURE THAT GOD MOVES IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS AND GET USED TO DISAPPOINTMENT.
NOT THIS TIME. THIS TIME HE ANSWERED YOUR PRAYERS.
AND I'M HERE TO SHARE THAT BLESSING.

TO SHARE IT WITH YOU.
I...I DON'T WANT IT! TAKE IT BACK!
PETER, THIS... THIS ISN'T YOU! YOU'RE...THE VENOM THING GOT INTO YOU SOMEHOW!
YOU'RE VENOM!
VENOM? VENOM WAS A HOPELESS LOSER. VENOM DIDN'T REALIZE HIS FULL POTENTIAL. VENOM WAS A SAD, LONELY CREATURE.
I'M SO MUCH MORE NOW. BUT IF YOU CAN'T FIND IT IN YOUR HEART TO CALL ME PETER...THEN HOW ABOUT...
...POISON?
UNHHHHH...
YES. POISON. AND I CAN SHARE MYSELF WITH YOU.
I HAVE THAT ABILITY NOW. I CAN REPLICATE MYSELF WITHIN YOU.
YOU'LL BE JUST LIKE ME, AND WE'LL BE TOGETHER...
I'D RATHER BE DEAD.
DEAD'S NO PROBLEM. I CAN MAKE THAT WORK.

OF COURSE, YOU WON'T HAVE YOUR OWN THOUGHT PROCESS. YOU'D BE JUST A SHELL WITH MY MIND MAKING YOU OPERATE.
BUT THAT'S NOT NECESSARILY A BAD THING. FEMALE COMPANIONSHIP WITHOUT THE PESKY, FEMININE IMPULSES GETTING IN THE WAY.
BACK OFF, BUB!
NOW!!!
BEING OVERPROTECTIVE, LOGAN? GOT SOMETHING GOING WITH MY WIFE ON THE SIDE?
SHE AIN'T YER WIFE, BUB. SHE WAS PETE'S WIFE. AND WHATEVER YOU ARE...WHATEVER YOU'VE BECOME...
YOU AIN'T PETER PARKER.

YOU SAY THAT LIKE IT'S A BAD THING.
UNHHH...
LISTEN T'ME, MAN! WHATEVER'S BEEN DONE TO YOU... WE CAN UNDO IT! YOU JUST GOTTA--
ACTUALLY... NO...
I DON'T "GOTTA" DO NOTHING.
ARRRHHH!!
CAGE--!
SHOULDER'S ON FIRE! HOW...?
ROCK-HARD SKIN DOESN'T DO MUCH AGAINST A STINGER THAT COULD BREAK ROCK.
GET OUT.
NOT WITHOUT YOU.
FINE.

"FINE?" WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "FINE?"
I MEAN I DON'T WANT TO SEE ANYONE ELSE GET HURT DEFENDING ME.
I MEAN I'M TIRED OF LIVING ON THIS EMOTIONAL ROLLERCOASTER.
I MEAN I CAN'T STAND SEEING YOU LIKE THIS, AND KNOWING YOU'RE OUT THERE...
KNOWING THAT THE MAN I LOVE WAS CONSUMED BY THIS... THIS THING.
GO AHEAD. MAKE ME LIKE YOU. DO WHATEVER'S NECESSARY. SUCK MY BLOOD OR STING ME OR WHATEVER.
AND I'LL BE WITH YOU THE REST OF YOUR DAYS. BUT KNOW THIS...
FOR DOING THIS TO ME... AND FOR WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO PETER...
I'M GOING TO MAKE EVERY ONE OF THOSE DAYS A LIVING HELL.

"THAT WAS THE LAST SHE SAW OF HIM.
"THERE ARE ANY NUMBER OF REASONS ONE MIGHT INFER FROM THIS AS TO WHY POISON LEFT HER UNTAINTED. A FINAL SPARK OF PETER PARKER'S LOVE FOR HER, PERHAPS.
"OR ANGER THAT SHE WAS OPENLY SCORNING HIM. OR MAYBE HE SIMPLY FELT SHE WASN'T WORTHY OF THE GIFT HE WISHED TO BESTOW.

"OR PERHAPS IT ULTIMATELY CAME DOWN TO THE CONCEPT OF 'OTHER.' POISON WAS STRONG-WILLED, MONSTROUS IN HIS DETERMINATION.
FOREST HILLS CEMETERY
"HE MAY SIMPLY HAVE REALIZED THAT, IN SEEKING THE MATE THAT HIS HUMAN ASPECT DROVE HIM TO FIND... FOR TO DESIRE A COMPANION IS A VERY HUMAN IMPULSE...
"HE NEEDED SOMEONE WHO WAS OTHER THAN HE. SOMEONE TO BE PLIABLE... SUPPORTIVE...SOMEONE HE COULD TRULY REBUILD IN HIS OWN IMAGE..."

"AND BESIDES... AS I NOTED EARLIER...
GWEN STACY
LOVING DAUGHTER
"YOU NEVER TRULY FORGET YOUR FIRST GREAT LOVE. AND IF YOU ARE DETERMINED ENOUGH, YOU CAN BUILD A LIFE WITH HER...
"...ONE WAY...
"...OR THE OTHER."
The End.